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FOUND OBJECTS AS SCULPTURE

By

Thomas Roy Sternal

B.A. University of Minnesota, 1965

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

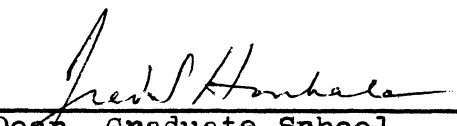
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
I. Mantis	4
II. Automated Animal of Prey.	5
III. Green Car Body	6
IV. Yellow Car Body	7
V. Composition in White	8
VI. Composition in Black.	9
VII. Memorial to Domesticated Birds	10
VIII. Easter Dinner	11

Everything is Sculpture. Even a thin sheet of paper has things in common with a piece such as Michelangelo's "David." It has three dimensions and it occupies space. Some would say that the "David" is a work of art done by a great artist; but is it an important piece because it was Michelangelo who worked it, or rather is it because it fulfills all the aesthetic criteria with which even the most thorough aesthete could confront it? The piece of paper could theoretically fulfill such a list of criteria, but rarely would one contemplate over a piece of paper. It is the work of the artist to place anything and everything before the viewer. Then it is up to the onlooker to react to it or let it pass unnoticed.

It is not my idea to put up everything or just anything, but rather selected items that I have tried to compose to please my sensibilities: Fantastic shapes that are unnatural to the world, not in their content but in their aesthetic distance from their true environment; welded junk, automobile parts, egg cartons cast in aluminum, paper, plastic bits and cans coated with layers of paint that disguise them enough that my eye can concentrate on their form and in turn on their expression.

It is not the true work of an artist to make something beautiful but rather to create an expression that attracts. Work of a man like Vladimir Tatlin or of other of the Russian constructionists, for example, Gabo and Rodchenko, was impersonal and the spatial relations they created were totally abstract. It is men like this who opened the way for our

abstract. It is men like this who opened the way for our modern junk sculptors such as Julio Gonzalez and even more recent men like David Smith, Jason Seley, and Richard Stankiewicz.

It is of no little importance in my own development that I saw a large exhibition of Stankiewicz' at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and had the opportunity to speak to him briefly. I was impressed by him and by his work, and I have used his work as a point of departure for my own work. I feel, however, that I have moved away from his aims to an area that more closely embraces the aims of a man like Marcel Duchamp, who in 1915 placed a shovel up for display. It is this idea of a found object that has really been gnawing at me. I am not a purist. I must adapt such objects to fit the more formal aspects of art. I am not content to leave a crushed can alone. I must paint it and put it in combination with other cans and bits and pieces of remnants.

Clive Bell writes in the forward of his book Art that: "Everyone in his heart believes that there is a real distinction between works of art and all other objects." To this statement I reply, No! Art is everything, and everything is Art. The word Art does not refer to an object but rather to the attitude that snatched up clay, pushed it and pulled it until it suited one man's senses, then placed it up for display. Art is active, not a precise entity. It has been the goal of my work to elevate mundane objects to the point of appraisal

by the onlooker. I am not aiming to improve the world but merely to experiment in a very limited sense; to catch the onlooker and give him a new vantage point.



Mantis, welded steel, 31 by 42 inches.



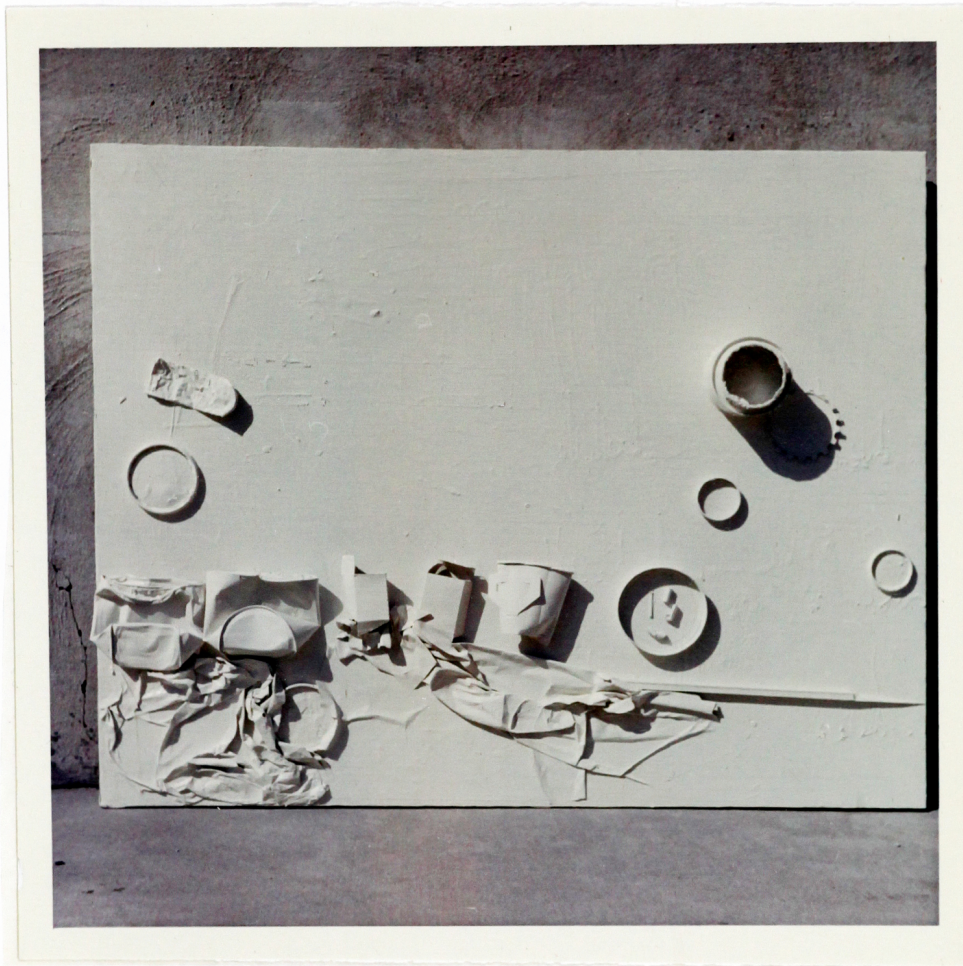
Automated Animal of Prey, welded steel, 46 by 36 inches.



Green Car Body, welded steel, 30 by 22 inches.



Yellow Car Body, welded steel, 24 by 25 inches.



Composition in White, collage, 36 by 45 inches.



Composition in Black, collage, 26½ by 33½ inches.



Memorial to Domesticated Birds, cast aluminum,



Easter Dinner, cast bronze, 12 by 17 inches.